1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

Presently the guests assemble, those who are *nuxalk* wearing on their heads one or more weasel skins as a mark of membership in the society. Each takes the seat to which he is entitled, the chiefs behind the fire, or on either side of it, the commoners, slaves, and foreigners in the two corners nearest the door. The heralds move to and fro between door and fire, their constant exchange of remarks adding to the general interest of the affair. It is the function of a herald to lend dignity to chiefs by the tone of his observations, but should one fail to live up to his station, the herald is privileged to comment thereon. In some respects his position approximates that of a buffoon, but as a herald always receives valuable presents, the office is sometimes accepted by ambitious young men, willing to undertake the slightly derogatory duties in return for the substantial gain.

A number of young lads, friends or relatives of X, distribute the food. It is placed in boxes; an important chief is not called upon to share with any one, whereas six or seven men of no standing may partake from one box. These receptacles, with whatever food remains in them, are taken home by the guests; otherwise the host would be insulted. Many boxes are lost in this way, a source of considerable irritation. After the first course, a second follows, consisting of a different kind of food in another box, and in some cases there is a third, and even a fourth course. A chief must never appear stingy. The more he gives, the more does his prestige increase. Also, a man who gives freely receives abundantly, so that generosity brings its reward.

Next, the father or other male relative of X's wife, or a fluent friend who speaks for him, stands up and makes a speech, extolling the fame of his own family by sketching in general outlines one of the myths of his ancestors, and announcing that X's wife is taking to her husband some portion of it. This may be the prerogative of using a spoon carved, for example, with the shape of a beaver; or a carved box, or a totem-pole with certain figures on it, or the right to use a painting of a grizzly bear on the wall of his house, or an ancestral name.

1:McDowell E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NEA Bellacoola NEA

881 bundle of four macaroni-shaped shells, probably *Dentalium*,
[301] which are said to have been imported from the north in early
434 times. These marks serve to indicate the position of the girl,
who is both feared and respected, possessed of supernatural
[889] power, and yet baneful. Many Bella Coola stories describe
[536] how adolescent girls have been able to vanquish supernatural
beings; perhaps the most striking of these is the manner in
which they once saved mankind when the sun came too close to
the earth. At the end of a year, or eleven months according to one old woman, the seclusion is terminated, and the girl
resumes her normal activities. The first time she goes to the
river she must throw on the water four pieces of dyed, and four
pieces of undyed cedar-bark. This is especially important if
the salmon are running at the time, although no explanation
of this ritual is given.

582 The resumption of her freedom indicates that a girl has
556 reached marriageable age. Chiefs sometimes confine their
882 daughters for even longer than a year, and usually delay their
marriages for several years to demonstrate their importance;
but this is not necessary, nor is it practised by other than
wealthy individuals. It is not uncommon for a girl to wed
before her year is out; in that case her restrictions automatically
[554] lapse. Chiefs never allow such a curtailment for their daughters; to do so would diminish the prestige of the latter, and
be detrimental to the status of their children when they marry
and have families. Illicit intercourse with a secluded adoles-
884 cent is considered not only illegal but disgusting as well. Be-
883 tween the period of confinement and marriage, intercourse is
[881] prohibited and guarded against by the parents of a girl, but
is not considered filthy and seems to have been fairly common
in former times with the daughters of poor people and slaves.
This sometimes took place before the first menstruation in
spite of the disapproval with which this was regarded.

824 Although the menstrual blood which appears at the first
841 discharge is considered more baneful than that emitted on later
789 occasions, it is always regarded as uncanny or unclean. It is